

interrupted by orders from Cyrus, the king of Persia, by whose leave they had returned and by permission they started to build the new temple. See Ezra 4 and 5. (2) The people who had returned in these fifteen years had grown rich, but also indifferent to the fact that while they had nice houses God's house was yet desolate. Hag. 1:2. (3) Haggai seeks to stir them up to a sense of their duty to God's house.

b. How he accomplished the purpose. (1) Showed the people that their unfruitful fields was a sign of God's displeasure at their neglect of his house. Hag. 1:3-11 and 2:10-19. (2) By encouraging Zerubbabel, the prince and the people when they undertook the work. Hag. 1:12-15; Hag. 2:1-9, 19. (3) By promising overthrow for their enemies by the power of God.

III Lessons for us

1. Too many are building nice houses for themselves today at the sacrifice of houses for God.

2. Our carelessness about God's affairs is often the reason we do not prosper as we should. The Lord has not promised to bless the stingy person, or the one who seeks his own interests first. Matt. 6:33.

3. The man who does not count on God's help, always says "can't."

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Beecher's Last Words

The following are the singularly appropriate closing words of Henry Ward Beecher's last sermon: "We are all marching thither. We are going home. Men shiver at the idea that they are going to die; but this world is only a nest. We are scarcely hatched out of it here. We do not know ourselves. We have strange feelings that do not interpret themselves. The mortal in us is crying out for the immortal. As in the night the child, waking with some vague and nameless terror, cries out to express its fear and dread, and its cry is interpreted in the mother's heart, who runs to the child and lays her hand upon and quiets it to sleep again, so do you not suppose that the ear of God hears our disturbances and trials and tribulations in life? Do you not suppose that He who is goodness cares for you? Do you not suppose that He whose royal name is Love has less sympathy for you than a mother has for her babe? Let the world rock. If the foot of God is on the cradle, fear not. Look up, take courage, hope, and hope to the end."

The Religion For Today

As has been often and well said there can be but one opinion as to the fact that one of the greatest needs of the age is a thoroughly holy Church. The world needs bringing to Christ; the Church is the Redeemer's chosen instrument; holiness is spiritual health, and without it there can be neither pure zeal, strong moral influence, nor power.

Students of Church history well know that there have been again and again periods of awakened spiritual life, in some cases bearing no slight resemblance to what is known

in our day as the "higher life movement." Monasticism took its rise in the recoil of downright earnest spirits from the coldness and worldliness of the times, and in a desire to seek in solitude a deeper fellowship with God than seemed possible amid the entanglements of secular life. The glimpses we have in the history of the mystics of the middle ages, in the brotherhood of "the friends of God" of Tauler's day, reveal the fact that amid the darkness of those times were multitudes who had sought and found what is now called the higher spiritual life.

The fact that there is today a great revival throughout the Churches of Christendom of the deepening of the spiritual life, and that this revival differs in many respects from former quickenings, leads to the question, What is the holiness needed to meet the wants of today? While the great essentials of spiritual life are ever the same, yet each age has its own development of that life, and in forms suited to its own peculiarities.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUE HOLINESS

The holiness needed today is a holiness whose very soul shall be *reality*—love to God and man, as genuine, as pure, clean hearts and lives, and the "fruit of the Spirit in all goodness and truth." This is an age of shams. In politics, business, social life, and too often, in religious profession—unreality everywhere! Holiness is worth nothing if it be not, in the soul and body of it, the genuine, and not a spurious thing.

What is wanted, moreover, is a *whole-hearted* holiness. Never were the calls more loud for full consecration—never did the vast harvest-field need laborers more sound in heart, robust in form, or strong of nerve. It will not do, this half devotion, this contentment with partial cleansing, this lukewarm love. For the times, men are wanted, "redeemed from iniquity, and zealous of good works."

Men are wanted, who in their individuality set forth manly, robust holiness, and show themselves able to grapple with the difficulties of living men, and to mix in the every-dayness of the world. A thing which shuns fresh air and stirring work, and trembles at opposition, and sighs for the cloister or the wilderness, is as sickly as it is sentimental, and is at a great remove from the ideal of our High Priest, who prays, not that we should be taken out of the world, but kept from the evil. Life is now much of a rough hand-to-hand fight, and the man who would do his Master service must be prepared to put on the armor, grasp a weapon, and take and give hard blows for his Lord's sake and the truth. A holiness is wanted that will go in among all secular life, to reprove what is sinful, and to carry purity and blessing everywhere. If there is need for more doctrine on this subject, the need is greater for more earnest, practical living of it. Better a hundred times hold an error in the creed, than allow a wrong in the life.

Whoever finds Christ seeks to help others to find him.

Our Bible School

SHORT SERMONS

And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. Judges 16:20.

Contrary to the law Samson had allied himself with a wicked and alien woman and when she sought to betray him to the Philistines he at first baffled her by a series of smart practical jokes. "Bind me with green withs," said he with a chuckle. "Bind me with new ropes." "Fasten my hair in the loom." "Ha! ha! I'm more than a match for you, my lady; I see your game."

It is a lesson of dallying with sin. He allows this woman to gain an unholy influence over him. That is the beginning of his folly. There were many daughters in Israel with whom he would have been safe and happy, but he ignores them and goes to the unscrupulous Delilah. He who unlocks his door to the thief must expect to be bereft of his goods.

Having made this fatal breach in his conscience, he endeavors to foil the advances of his destroyer. The poison is swallowed, but it shall not hurt him. The spy has been received inside the walls, but he shall not open the gates to the enemy. Cunning Samson will outwit him. "I can stop when I please," says the drinker. "I will go just so far, but no farther in sin," says the moral idiot.

Then comes the fine play between smart fool and smarter devil. Samson plays his tricks and laughs at his success. Satan is not at all discouraged. He knows the virtue of perseverance. He coaxes and wheedles and complains and entices and keeps on and on with infinite variety of resource and infinite patience, until at last his victory is sure.

Samson wist not that the Lord was departed from him. Why? Because as we see he was not walking with God, had no spiritual communion with the Lord, was not conscious of the divine presence, and therefore felt no difference when the Lord left him. There were his mighty thews and sinews, but the power was gone, which reminds us of some other great champions of the modern Israel. Captivity and darkness followed, but the captivity and darkness which preceded it was by far the greater calamity of the two.

Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? Is. 49:24.

The question probably refers to the Babylonish captivity, and was doubtless asked in discouragement. In those days captives taken in war were lawful prey, so that the Babylonians had a legal right, founded upon international law, to keep the Israelites as slaves. Moreover they were the masters of the world, supported invincible armies, and were consequently well able to defend all their rights. Still more, they were terrible, possessed a fierce invincibility, were given to a savage and relentless cruelty, made themselves the terror and dread of all nations. Who could withstand them, or contend with them?